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To: Judy Smith/R10/USEPA/US@EPA
cc:
Subject: FW: Today's Oregonian

Here is the story from this morning's Oregonian. We think it is great and we also see the opportunity to do the full briefing and "fill in the blanks". I look forward to meeting with you and Mark McIntyre tomorrow morning.

Businesses, city agree on Willamette Superfund study

The Associated Press
9/25/01 4:13 AM

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) -- The city of Portland, the Port of Portland and 10 firms have agreed to pay for analysis of what pollutants are in the Portland harbor Superfund site and what harm they might cause.

The agreement, which has not been signed, shows a willingness by business to be involved in what should be an expensive cleanup.

Studying the sediments of Portland harbor and determining the risks of cleanup will cost millions of dollars and take two years or more. Only after that study is complete will the cleanup begin.

"We're now under way," said Portland Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who said he intends to sign the document on behalf of Portland. "This is the right thing to do for a city that portrays itself as being on top of environmental issues."

The Environmental Protection Agency targeted the Willamette River between Swan and Sauvie islands as a possible Superfund site after sediment tests in 1997 found high levels of pesticides, heavy metals, tars, mercury and arsenic.

The harbor was put on the federal list of the nation's most contaminated sites in 2000.

The 10 companies are members of the Lower Willamette Group, a voluntary consortium convened by the Port to investigate pollution of the Portland harbor and begin cleanup work.

One of the companies, NW Natural, said it is still reviewing the agreement but intends to sign.

"We're committed to ensuring that testing and cleanup moves forward," said Steve Sechrist, a spokesman for NW Natural.

The EPA has not begun an investigation to determine who is responsible for the pollution. None of the 10 firms underwriting the assessment has been implicated in polluting, and many more firms than are represented in the assessment could be held responsible for cleanup costs.

The Superfund law says that whoever is found responsible for contaminating a Superfund site is responsible for the cost of cleanup.

Wallace Reid, the Superfund project coordinator for the EPA in Seattle, said he was pleased that the negotiated agreement had been reached and hoped it would be signed by top executives of the companies and by Port and city officials.

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"I think this is one of the best agreements that the EPA has ever negotiated," he said.